

Unshakable Faith

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UNSHAKABLE FAITH BeElleGee Beej@fanfix.zzn.com

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The prostitute named Ibesi, watched the male human with growing interest. There was something different about him. Maybe it was his arrogant swagger, or maybe it was just his overall bearing, but he wasn't the usual type who ventured down Kayel's alleys in search of companionship.

Ibesi saw he was very well-dressed, clad head to toe in black. Being fair-skinned, he looked like a ghostly apparition in the moonlight. Perhaps he was well-off financially. He continued walking through the alley with a lengthy stride, resolutely ignoring the prostitutes who eagerly propositioned him; his purpose seemingly elsewhere.

Ibesi licked her lips in anticipation. She watched him approach and fixed her eyes on him alluringly. At least she had one thing in her favor, unlike the rest of the whores infesting this alley, she was human and perhaps he preferred his own kind.

The closer he came, the more certain Ibesi was that he was coming to

her. As he walked under a moonbeam, he looked up at her and their eyes met. He tossed his head to shake back his thick, shoulder-length black hair which fell rakishly over his blue jewel-like eyes. Ibesi saw that he was very handsome and her heart began beating a little bit faster. He was sexy. For someone like him, she would go above and beyond her normal services. She would make sure he was more than satisfied with her. Ibesi smiled to herself. With a man like him, she wouldn't even have to fake her own pleasure. Maybe he would be so taken with her, he would seek her services again and again. Maybe he would want her exclusively as his own. She would never have to solicit other beings again.

Ibesi stepped away from the side of the building she had been leaning against and into the light of the moon. She smoothed her hair away from her face and waited, smiling hopefully.

He passed another prostitute. She reached out for his arm but she missed and snagged a handful of his black cloak in her claws. He turned and glared threateningly at her and she immediately released him and shrank back into the shadows.

Ibesi had caught sight of the belt he wore when his cloak was pulled back. It was a black skin belt studded with silver and red jewels. Very expensive, Ibesi thought. But there was something else on the belt which she found far more intriguing. It was a long, silver, cylindrical device that Ibesi had only read about before. She had only caught a glimpse of it, but was certain it was a lightsaber. Now she knew what it was that made him seem so different. Now she realized what she had been sensing in him. As he drew closer to her, she became certain of it. Her smile widened as she stepped forward to greet him.

To her delight, he smiled back at her, but to her utter chagrin, he continued walking right past her without even slowing his pace.

Ibesi's heart sank. He hadn't wanted her after all. He wasn't attracted to her. To him, she was no better than the rest of the whores here.

He was walking away from her and in a few short strides, he would be out of the alley and onto Bacher Street and she would probably never see him again. She couldn't possibly just let him walk away knowing what he was. A chance like this only came once in a lifetime on Kayel. Impulsively, she cleared her throat.

"So what brings a Jedi Knight to the back alleys of Kayel?" she called after him.

He stopped abruptly and turned around to face her. His smile was gone and the expression on his face told Ibesi he was not at all pleased by her question.

"I happen to be late. I opted to negotiate this alley to save time. Actually, it's none of your concern. And what makes you think I'm a Jedi?" he asked in a clear dulcet voice that hinted a complacent status of educated refinement.

Ibesi gazed up at him. She was surprised by the anger she felt emanating from him. She didn't understand it. And the way he was

looking at her made her feel suddenly unworthy to be breathing the same air as he was.

"I asked you a question," he snapped, placing his hands on his hips in a gesture of barely contained impatience.

Ibesi walked up to him slowly, uncertainly. His steely eyes were locked on hers in a cold, unblinking stare. "It's just that..." she began, and suddenly realized her mistake.

Most Jedi preferred to be incognito when on their own time and if he was intending to solicit a prostitute, he certainly would not want to be hailed as a Jedi. Come to think of it, he wasn't dressed the way most Jedi's dressed. And the lightsaber had been concealed.

"I'm sorry," Ibesi apologized. "I won't tell anyone, I promise." She offered him a small smile. "It's just that I noticed you carried a lightsaber and--" She gestured towards it lying against his hip and suddenly found her wrist in a vice-like grip as he seized her hand.

"Don't even think about it," he warned.

Ibesi cringed and twisted her arm to free herself. He released her and Ibesi quickly backed away from him. "Ow, I wasn't..." she protested.

"Just because I carry a lightsaber as my weapon of choice doesn't mean I'm a Jedi," he went on.

Ibesi frowned and massaged her wrist. "It wasn't just that," she continued to explain. "You have their power. You are very strong with it. I...can feel it."

His demeanor suddenly changed. He shifted his weight to one leg and seemed to be studying her with new interest now. He took a deep breath and exhaled it slowly, his eyes swept over her and he furrowed his brow.

"You 'felt' it?" he asked.

Ibesi nodded. "I can feel things. I can sense things about people." She paused, waiting for him to start ridiculing her, the way others had in the past when she revealed this about herself, but instead he looked intrigued. Encouraged, she continued in greater detail. "Apparently, when I was an infant, I was supposed to be tested...to be a Jedi. But something happened and I never was. I guess I am what they call 'Force-sensitive.' "

The corners of the man's lips turned up slightly and he nodded slowly. "Yes. Yes you do have it. Imagine that," he murmured.

Ibesi allowed herself to hope he would reconsider taking her with him. She moved closer to him and smiled coyly, pushing her long hair off her neck seductively.

"I've always wanted to meet a Jedi Knight. I would love to get to know you better. My name is Ibesi. What is your name?" She tried to sound confident and sexy. She was using the Force to instill increasing feelings of passion in him.

The man smiled, obviously amused by her blatant attempts to seduce him. Provocatively, he reached up and traced his long fingers down the bared side of her neck. Using the Force as well, he enhanced the sensation she felt, sending her waves of lascivious pleasure, and effectively fueling her own desire for him. Two could play at this game.

Ibesi felt an icy tingle shimmy down the length of her. She closed her eyes and sighed. "Oh...wow. That's incredible." She couldn't remember the last time she had actually enjoyed being touched by a man so much. "Please tell me your name," she asked again.

He hesitated, weighing the consequences in his mind of revealing his identity to her, than seemed to come to a decision.

"My name is Xanatos," he told her. "And I'm sorry to disappoint you, but I am not a Jedi."

Ibesi opened her eyes and faced him. She gave him a knowing smile.

"Of course. But it's all right, really. I know all about the Jedi. I've seen Jedi on the holonet before and I read everything I can on them. I truly admire the Jedi. But if you'd rather not 'be' a Jedi tonight, I understand. I'm not here to judge you, Xanatos. I'm here to please you. I know that a Jedi like yourself is still a man...with a man's needs."

Xanatos laughed lightly. He sighed and shook his head. His hand moved to caress Ibesi's face, his thumb gently brushing her lips.

"You are an enticing little morsel, Ibesi, and would be a welcome diversion, but I do have duties to attend to. Business before pleasure, and all that."

Again Ibesi's heart sank. She nodded reluctantly. "I understand. I know Jedi are very committed. I know your responsibilities come first," she stated.

Xanatos grinned. "For the last time, I'm not a Jedi."

Ibesi flushed slightly. "Right. I'll try to remember that."

Xanatos laughed again. "Oh, what the hell, call me a Jedi, if that's what you wish."

Ibesi smiled and shrugged innocently. "It's whatever YOU wish, Xanatos. I'll do anything for you. Anything you want."

Xanatos sighed with capitulation and started to turn away from her, then stopped, reconsidering.

"Perhaps later tonight. You could come to me," he offered. "At my place of lodgings. Do you know the Sandrington?"

Ibesi suppressed a gasp. She nodded eagerly. The Sandrington was a very affluent hotel, frequented only by the very wealthy and important.

"Good," Xanatos said and smiled. "Give me a few hours. Then I'll expect you."

"I'll be there," Ibesi said, entranced.

Xanatos turned again. "Oh, and don't come expecting to be paid or anything like that. My invitation is extended to you merely because I like you and I think you're an attractive woman. I'm not inviting you as a prostitute. Understand?" He didn't wait for an answer and quickly stalked out of the alley.

Ibesi stood staring after him, wide-eyed and open-mouthed, but genuinely elated.

Much later that night, Ibesi made her way down Rocheller Street by way on the back alleys. Out of habit, she stayed in the shadows and off the main thoroughfares to avoid the local law enforcement. The Sandrington Hotel was on the corner of Rocheller and Fellway.

She was anxious to see Xanatos again. She had been thinking about him all night and was looking forward to being with him, even if he had refused to pay her. He was still a wealthy and handsome man and for a change, this tryst would be for her pleasure as well as his. She had to admit, what intrigued her most about him, was that he was a Jedi. To her, the Jedi were romantic, heroic figures. Staidly, powerful, and prestigious, but humble and servile at the same time.

A sudden sensation of apprehension struck Ibesi. An odd feeling she got sometimes that told her something was wrong. She stopped walking and looked slowly around. She couldn't see anything out of the ordinary, but she 'knew' she was being watched.

Swallowing down her surfacing fear, she started off again, increasing her pace. She passed a dark recessed entryway which seemed to lead down a narrow passage and immediately knew she had made a grave mistake. She found herself surrounded and under attack by a gang of Dugs.

Ibesi screamed as several pairs of arms and legs pulled her heavily to the ground. She kicked and flailed at her attackers who in turn began beating on her. They stomped on her and pounded on her face, bruising her eyes and splitting her lip. They bit her and scratched her, tearing at her clothes, taking what little jewelry she wore and robbed her of the few coins she had earned.

Ibesi tried to get up, but they pulled her back down again and started attacking her with new zeal. One of them started strangling her. She tried to push it off of her, but didn't have the strength anymore to move it. The pain in her neck became excruciating. Her lungs began to ache from lack of air and she began seeing black spots.

With a cruel smile, the Dug released Ibesi before she lost total consciousness and hopped off of her. It kicked the side of her face viciously and grabbed her hair with one of its feet. It said something to her, but Ibesi didn't understand the language it spoke. It got frustrated and jerked her head up, then brutally smashed it back against the ground. Ibesi felt her scalp crack and her hair

dampen with blood.

Ibesi had never felt so helpless before. She briefly considered spitting on them to anger them so they would kill her faster and end the agony she was in. But then she suddenly thought of Xanatos. He would help her. If she concentrated and called out to him, he would hear her. Jedi could do such things. When he realized she was in trouble, he would come to her aid. He would save her. He had too.

Xanatos leaned back in his chair with a heavy sigh. He listened to the regional manager of Kayel drone on about net assets and gross margins and tried to keep his mind focused on the OffWorld Corporation reports in front of him and not the whirlpool bath waiting for him in his hotel suite.

Xanatos fixed his eyes on the regional manager with a look of unparalleled interest. He nodded a few times for good measure, but in truth, the regional manager had lost Xanatos' interest over an hour ago.

I've never had a very disciplined mind, Xanatos thought to himself. Never had good business sense either. His eyes drifted slowly around the room at the equally bored faces of his CEOs. He smiled slightly, amused. Oh, I agree, gentlemen. Mining isn't exactly fascinating to me and the business end of it even less so. The only part I like about it is the revenue it brings me. We certainly can't deny it's lucrative.

"And now, I shall relay our district's gross and net profits for the last fiscal year," the regional manager announced proudly. He smiled at Xanatos.

Xanatos groaned inwardly, but returned the smile and gestured for the manager to proceed.

Yes I'm thrilled OffWorld is doing so well here, but can we please wrap this up soon? Xanatos pleaded mentally. I do have another, much more appealing appointment to keep. A barrage of delectable and provocative images came to mind as he thought of the beautiful prostitute who would be eagerly indulging him later this evening. Xanatos shifted in his chair uncomfortably.

"...gave us a percentage of two-fifths and nine-sixteenths over last year's percentage of three-eighths and"

Xanatos took a deep breath and closed his eyes, tuning out the sound of the manager's grating voice, the CEO's and the board of director's, and the rest of his utterly drab surroundings.

A woman suddenly emitted a blood-curdling scream. Xanatos' eyes flew open and he looked wildly around the room. No one else seemed to have heard it. She pleaded for help. Waves of pain enveloped him. He heard her voice then, calling his name, begging him to come to her in a stirring of the Force; that explained everything with clarity.

"Ibesi," Xanatos murmured aloud with chilling certainty.

Everyone in the room suddenly turned to him. He frowned and dismissed their inquiries with a wave of his hand.

"Forgive me. Continue. Please," Xanatos told the regional manager, even though he was far too distracted now to hear another word the man said.

Ibesi was in trouble, that much was certain. But how dare she? Xanatos seethed mentally. Reaching out to him through the Force because she insisted he was a Jedi. She knew he would hear her. She naturally assumed he would run to her aid. Maybe a real Jedi would. There was only one flaw to her assumption. He wasn't a Jedi. He didn't want to be thought of as a Jedi. In fact, he despised the Jedi.

Her agony ripped jaggedly through him. The fear she was feeling pierced him to the core. Xanatos sunk into his chair and tried to block her invasion of his mind. It angered him that she would even consider using the Force on him in such a way.

Get out of my head and leave me alone, Xanatos projected back to her. This is a simple case of mistaken identity. Crawl inside a real Jedi if you want someone to help you. Why should I care what happens to you? Who are you to me anyway? You're nothing but a whore.

Xanatos tried to ignore what he was sensing. He tried to downplay it. She had probably just gotten herself a customer who liked it a little rough, that's all, Xanatos told himself. So what if she got herself beaten up. It only meant she would not be coming to call on him later that night. He really didn't care one way or the other. He was not about to run off and rescue her.

But even as he struggled to convince himself of his cold-hearted apathy, feelings of concern and anxiety surfaced inside him. He knew he was lying to himself. Much to his dismay, he did care. He knew she was in considerable danger. She was calling to him out of desperation. There was simply no one else for her to turn to for help. In a way, he felt touched by her faith in him.

Xanatos closed his eyes tightly to relieve the incessant pressure inside his head. A Jedi wouldn't hesitate to go to her. It wouldn't matter to a Jedi that she was only a pitiful street-walker. A Jedi would defend her valiantly regardless, risking his life for her because to a Jedi, even the most lowly beings deserved as much. They were so full of it, Xanatos told himself. I hate the Jedi. I'm not a damned Jedi!

Xanatos stood up abruptly. "Blast it all to hell!" he snarled, effectively silencing everyone in the conference room. He rose and took a deep steadying breath. "Please excuse me," he began, edging towards the door. "I suddenly find my presence needed elsewhere."

Ibesi tried to roll on her side but found she couldn't. Through her pain-wracked haze, she could hear the Dugs arguing among themselves in their caustic, guttural language. She didn't understand them, but had a slight notion as to the reason behind their disagreement.

One of the Dugs kept drunkenly waving a blaster at her while another kept knocking it away. The argument was escalating. A third Dug stood off to the side of the alleyway, pouring over the meager possessions they had relieved Ibesi of. It seemed odd to her that they didn't appear to be in any hurry to abandon the scene of their crime. It occurred to her then, that they didn't have any reason to. No one was around. No one was coming to help her. She was entirely at their mercy; something they had shown very little of up to this point.

Ibesi felt her consciousness slipping. Her mouth tasted gritty and dry except for the coppery taste of blood in the back of her throat. Her eyes stung with unshed tears. What a way to die, she thought. Alone and uncared for, in a cold and wet alley, robbed of the few things of any value she owned. Nobody deserves to die like this, she lamented. Not even me.

The Dug with the blaster pointed it at her once more, fending off its companion with a sharp word. Ibesi watched it in quiet resignation. Everything seemed to be moving in slow motion now. She saw its foot tighten around the trigger. She saw the deadly blast coming towards her, but then suddenly it wasn't there.

From above, a wall of blackness descended in front of her and flashes of red light streaked across the darkness. The Dugs screeched in terror and tried to flee as if the specter of death itself was pursuing them. And he was.

Xanatos made quick work of Ibesi's assailants; reducing them all in moments to sizzling body parts and severed limbs. He deactivated his lightsaber and stood looking down at the carnage strewn about the alley. He seemed surprised at how easily he had been able to overtake them.

Ibesi breathed his name and Xanatos turned around to face her in a swirl of cloak. He knelt down beside her, shaking his head slowly in disbelief. He looked her over, quickly assessing the extent of her injuries and sighed despondently. Her Life-Force was fading. Her wounds were fatal.

Ibesi tried to reach out and touch him, but didn't have the strength. Xanatos caught her hand in his and carefully gathered her in his arms.

"Don't try to move," he told her.

Ibesi smiled slowly. "You're...a sight for sore...eyes," she greeted, her voice barely audible. She was pleased to see him. Through her pain, his embrace was warm and comforting.

"And you're a just a sight," Xanatos half teased her.

"...You...heard me," Ibesi whispered weakly. "It's why you...are here."

"Yes," Xanatos answered. "How did you know about that?" he inquired, hoping to distract her. He gathered the Force to him and focused its quiet peace in her mind to numb her pain and ease her discomfort. He

was somewhat surprised by its strength. He had forgotten the power of the light side. He was even more surprised that he was still able to utilize it.

Ibesi smiled slightly. "I know...with the Force...a Jedi can," she paused and took a deep exhausted breath. "...call another Jedi....and I knew if I called for you....you would come to me."

Xanatos closed his eyes briefly and turned his face away from her. He cursed himself soundly. When he faced her again, he squeezed her cold hand and smiled sadly. "It worked, despite the fact that neither of us are Jedi."

Ibesi nodded. "I'm not...but you are a powerful...Jedi so I knew...you would come to me. I have...a lot of faith in...the Jedi.

Xanatos reached over and brushed Ibesi's hair from her eyes. "Well, it is nice to have someone believe in me again, but in all truthfulness, Ibesi, I am not a Jedi. I was once. A long time ago. But I left the Order. I rejected their teachings and philosophies. I've surrendered myself to darkness. To them, I am a shameful disgrace."

Ibesi merely smiled. "I'll never...believe that," she breathed. "...You still...have the heart...of a Jedi. That's what...counts. Tonight...proved it...."

Her eyes slowly closed and Xanatos could feel her body relax against him as she died. He drew her up closer to him, stroking the side of her face, and softly kissed her hair.

End
file.